unreserved train between Amritsar and Barauni has been increased from bi-weekly to triweekly from October, 1996.

[English]

Assurance to the Passengers

996. SHRI MULLAPPALLY RAMACHANDRAN : Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government have given any assurance to the international passengers travelling to Gulf from Calicut Airport that the user's charge being levied on them at Calicut airport shall be dispensed with; and

(b) if so, the steps taken in this regard so far?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION AND MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (SHRI C.M. IBRAHIM) : (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

Euro Issue of V.S.N. Ltd.

997. SHRI MADHAVRAO SCINDIA : Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Comptroller and Auditor General of India in his recent report has expressed concern about the sudden scrapping of the Euro-issue-proposal of Videsh Sanchar Nigam Ltd. in May, 1994;

(b) whether enquiries have since been made into the circumstances of the scrapping of the proposal; and

(c) the extent of loss estimated to have been incurred by the Government as a result thereof?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA) : (a) The Director General of Audit, Post and Telecommunications has forwarded a copy of Draft Paragraph on deferment of Euro Issue" for inclusion in the C & AG Report, Union Govt. (Commercial) No. 3 of 1997 and has given an audit analysis of the case.

(b) and (c). Does not arise in view of (a) above.

Broad Gauge Line from Lumding to Silchar

998. SHRI DWARAKANATH DAS : Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state :

(a) whether Broad Gauge Line from Lumding to Silchar as proposed in the Railway Budget for 1996-97 is likely to go via Badarpur Railway junction of Karimganj District of Bihar;

(b) whether there is any proposal to extend the above line from Badarpur Railway Junction to Kumarghat in Tripura; and

(c) if so, by when the proposed Broad gauge line is likely to be completed?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI SATPAL MAHARAJ) : (a) and (b). Yes, Sir. However, Badarpur Junction is not located in Bihar but in Assam.

(c) The Lumding-Silchar Gauge Conversion has been sanctioned and work is being taken up. It is expected to be completed by the end of the 9th Plan. Gauge Conversion of linked lines beyond Badarpur/ Silchar are expected to be taken up thereafter as per availability of resources.

AIR/Doordarshan Projects

999. DR. KRUPASINDHU BHOI : Will the Minister of INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING be pleased to state the details of AIR/Doordarshan Projects proposed to be taken up during the Ninth Plan, State-wise; location-wise?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION AND MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (SHRI C.M. IBRAHIM) : The Ninth plan proposals of All India Radio and Doordarshan are still under formulation. Hence, it would not be possible to specify the details thereof.

[Translation]

Superstitions in Serial

1000. SHRI GANGA CHARAN RAJPUT : Will the Minister of INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING be pleased to state :

(a) whether most of the serials based on sorcery, hypocrisy and superstitions are being telecast on television;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(c) the steps taken or being taken by the Government to stop the telecast of such serials?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION AND MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (SHRI C.M. IBRAHIM) : (a) No, Sir.

(b) and (c). Do not arise.

Copper Mines under HCL

1001. SHRI RAJENDRA AGNIHOTRI :
SHRI S.D.N.R. WADIYAR :

Will the Minister of MINES be pleased to state :

(a) the number of Copper mines under Hindustan Copper Limited;

(b) the production in these mines during each of the last three years;

(c) whether the Government have reviewed the performance of the smelters and refineries under the HCL;

(d) if so, the details thereof during the last three years;

(e) whether the production of copper is sufficient to meet the demand of the country;

(f) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(g) the steps taken to boost the production of the copper?

THE MINISTER OF STEEL AND MINISTER OF MINES (SHRI BIRENDRA PRASAD BAISHYA) : (a) and (b) Hindustan Copper Limited (HCL) a Public Sector Undertaking under the Ministry of Mines is presently having nine operating mines. The unitwise production of different mines of the Company for the last three financial years is given below :

(In tonnes)

		1993-94	1994-95	1995-96
(i)	Indian Copper Complex group of Mines (Mosaboni, Pathargora, Surda, Kendadih and Rakha mines) in Bihar	12,38,221	11,28,928	10,58,957
(ii)	Khetri Mines (Khetri, Kolihan and Chandmari mines) in Rajasthan	16,87,279	16,56,643	16,03,931
(iii)	Malanjkhand Copper Project (Malanjkhand Mines) in Madhya Pradesh	19,90,799	19,20,385	20,27,386

(c) and (d) The performance of the Company including smelters and refineries is regularly reviewed on a quarterly basis. The performance of two Smelters and Refineries of Hindustan Copper Ltd. for the last 3 financial years are as under :

(In tonnes)

	1993-94	1994-95	1995-96
Smelter/Refinery			
Blister Copper	37160	90454	40259
Refined Copper (Cathode)	39002	46134	41153

(e) and (f) The present indigenous copper production is not sufficient to meet the entire demand of the country which is around 3 lakhs tonnes per annum. The installed capacity of Hindustan Copper Limited which is the sole producer of primary copper in the country is only 47500 tonnes per annum. Because of the low grade of copper ore available in the country, the cost of production of refined copper from indigenous sources is higher and only a fraction of domestic requirement is met from indigenous sources and balance requirement is met through imports.

(g) With the opening of the economy and the reduction of customs duty on copper concentrate, a number of new units are being set up in the private sector which would be based on imported concentrates. Hindustan Copper Limited also has formulated scheme for expansion of its Khetri Smelter and Refinery from the existing capacity of 31,000 tpa to 1,00,000 tpa at an estimated cost of Rs. 528.65 crores. On the successful implementation and completion of the expansion scheme, the copper production of Hindustan Copper Limited will substantially increase by 70,000 tpa.

Settlement of Railway Claims

1002. SHRIMATI CHHABILA ARVIND NETAM: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state :

(a) the criteria laid down for settlement of railway claims;

(b) the time takes place in settling the railway claims;

(c) whether the Government have received any complaint regarding corruption in settlement of railway claims; and

(d) if so, the action taken by the Government against the guilty officials?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI SATPAL MAHARAJ) : (a) Compensation claims is paid in case where Railways are liable under the provisions of the Railways Act, 1989.

(b) While average time taken in settlement of goods compensation claims has been 32 days during 1995-96, it was around 10 months in case of accident compensation claims.

(c) During the last 3 years, 24 complaints of corruption in settlement of Railway claims were received by the Vigilance Department.